

The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University
Ohio State Engineer

Title: Drawing Room Music

Creators: Neel, F. R.

Issue Date: May-1931

Publisher: Ohio State University, College of Engineering

Citation: Ohio State Engineer, vol. 14, no. 7 (May, 1931), 6.

URI: <http://hdl.handle.net/1811/34801>

Appears in Collections: [Ohio State Engineer: Volume 14, no. 7 \(May, 1931\)](#)

DRAWING ROOM MUSIC

By F. R. NEEL, Cer. 4

EDITOR'S NOTE: We are delighted to present our readers with this exposition on music in engineering. While the author's experience is limited to ceramic engineering design, we are sure countless parallels may be found (if diligently sought) in other pencil-pushing courses.

Music has the soothing power of a mother, even as in the days of old. Not that we need a mother in the drawing laboratory, but the music does take away the sharp pains caused by bending over a drawing board with eyes screwed to the small details.

Then again, we repeat an old saw (or is it a quotation from Tennyson?), "in the spring a young man's fancy turns to thoughts of love." Far be it from me to be in love as meant here; but hold, my worthy ceramicers let us consider just what an ocarina is.

In days past some overzealous person named the ocarina a "sweet-potato" — not sweet patootie, just the ordinary long crooked tuber family product, the good old standby of the Southern Negro. "Boy, how them old 'possums and sweet-potatoes tasted!"

Now, my dear reader (pardon me from digressing from the subject so far), let us take up the ocarina from a cold-blooded engineering standpoint.

It must be kept in mind this melodious dispenser of ecclesiastical joy is the product of some grim, sour, dogged faced individual, a ceramic engineer, really a bricklayer in disguise. It is his crafty brain (trained in one of our schools of higher learning and better necking) that has fed the gullible public one of the lowest sounding names and yet, belying its name, one of the most heavenly attuned perpetrators of music.

The "potato" proper consists of an earthenware body—cheap at that—and cast in two parts, the two parts later being stuck together. In the meantime the perforations of the pieces have been drilled out by hand with machine-like precision. Of course this operation is supervised by a hatchet-faced individual who probably took his Master's degree in "pulverizing" from Sing Sing.

Now after the body proper is formed, it is put through the usual drying and firing processes.

(See Bureau of Stds. Bulletin No. 1016—subject, "Manufacture and Playing of Sweet Potatoes Learned at Home." Be popular.) The glaze is then applied and fired and the result is a music-maker fit for the King, or maybe the President—President of the American Toothpick Co. It will be recalled from antiquity that the Pied Piper of Hamelin once used a similar sounding instrument to rid the city of rats.

Strangely enough, I found the piccolo's cousin very useful in the drawing lab. Due to Trees' behavior, premonitions to some of the dusky-hued tribe, I was forced, by my superiority complex and distaste for the sons of Noah's "bad boy," Ham, to resort to subtle means of expelling from our fountain of knowledge the aforementioned rabble. Now the interruption of the music by an ogre-like instructor was purely an accident. Having not even a Big Ben sundial to use (being just a poor boy trying to get along) I sort of played a few bars past the allotted time deadline.

But, dear reader, the effect on the whole drawing class was truly remarkable. After a few enlightening strains from the zither-like instrument, the boys fell to work with a will and with loud and boisterous, if not good, singing. In fact, they seemed to forget the usual drudgery, griping and cuss-

ing that was always present under the old régime, in the drawing lab.

Not only that, but when a paper was passed as an expression of appreciation of the services rendered, your humble "music-maker" received the hearty endorsement of all members of the class. Verily, I believe, had a hat been passed by the aforementioned "music-maker" he would undoubtedly have received enough grapefruit to last him the remainder of the spring quarter.

Now, my lucky public, I await the final rebuttal argument of the negative.

However I sincerely hope that none will have the temerity to oppose the stand I have taken in this matter.



The Author at Work